

February 22, 2013

Good Evening Senator Harp and Representative Abercrombie and the members of the Human Services Subcommittee,

My name is Susan Quinlan and I am the Executive Director of Families in Crisis, Inc. We are one of six certified sites that provide fatherhood programming for the State of Connecticut. Our agency works with fathers in prison designed to enhance their abilities to meet the social, emotional and financial needs of their children both while incarcerated and upon release.

We ask this Committee to restore the funding for the statewide fatherhood initiative (\$500,000) to the six sites that was cut from the CT Department of Social Services budget. Since initially funded over six years ago, and named in honor of the late Representative John Martinez, these programs have successfully achieved outcomes that strengthened not only children and families but the communities they reside in. Services that assist fathers obtain employment, financially contribute to their families and actively co-parent their children show not only immediate benefits but strengthens families/communities for future generations.

Fatherlessness is a critical problem in Connecticut. When we consider where many of these missing fathers are – we need look no further than our prisons. The majority of these fathers report a marginal relationship with their children before they went to prison. Yet, when we talk to their children they share that they have the best connection with their dads when those fathers were in prison. Parenting programs in prison can and do provide a valuable opportunity to bring fathers together with their children. Our programs build parental commitment and skills while dads are incarcerated that will be built upon when discharged. Children greatly benefit when they have two parents that care for their well-being.

Families in Crisis, Inc. has a long and successful track record strengthening vulnerable families and communities. I strongly urge you to continue funding this important work – for today and tomorrow's children and families.

Without this funding, thousands of children and their parents will not receive critically needed services to achieve healthy family relationships and self-sufficiency. Responsible fathers – who play a key role in child development and family economic success create strong families, and strong families lead to better outcomes for children.

Thank you for your time and if you have any comments or questions please feel free to contact me at Families in Crisis, Inc. 860.727.5810.

Connecticut Fatherhood Coalition

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood

Overview

In 1999, Public Act 99-193 *An act Concerning voluntary Paternity Establishment and the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative* was implemented. This is a broad based public private partnership, led by the CT Department of Social Services, to focus on the provision of quality services and system change to improve a father's ability to be responsible for and involved in the lives of their children.

And, father absence takes a toll on government. One conservative estimate is that father absence costs taxpayers \$100 billion yearly (*the One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: The Annual Cost of Father Absence, National Fatherhood Initiative, 2008*).

Initially 6 Connecticut non profit agencies received funding from DSS to operate fatherhood programs. Later, the State also received a five year federal grant to enhance and expand upon the success of those programs. The federal grant ended in September 2011. **Funding was not included in this budget. \$500,000 is needed to maintain current services at the 6 sites and continue this important work.**

Without this funding, thousands of children and their parents will not receive critically needed services to achieve healthy family relationships and self-sufficiency. Responsible fathers – who play key roles in child development and family economic success- create strong families, and strong families lead to good outcomes for children.

Outcomes

Children are better off when their fathers are actively engaged in their lives.

Families are better off when fathers fulfill their social and financial responsibilities.

Connecticut is better off when policies and programs support responsible fathering.

Certified Member Agencies

These are the agencies that have demonstrated the knowledge, skills and capacity to operate quality and cost effective fatherhood programs as certified by the CT Department of Social Services

Career Resources, Inc.
Bridgeport
Scott Wilderman

Family Strides, Inc.
Torrington
Nichole Laracuenta

Families in Crisis, Inc.
Hartford
Susan Quinlan

New Haven Family Alliance, Inc.
New Haven
Barbara Tinney

Madonna Place, Inc.
Norwich/New London
Nancy Gentes

New Opportunities for Waterbury Inc.
Waterbury
James Gatling

For additional information please contact Susan Quinlan at Families in Crisis, Inc.
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